



# DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

## INFORMATION SERVICE

BUREAU OF BIOLOGICAL SURVEY

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### AIR LINE FLIES DUCKS ACROSS COUNTRY FOR RELEASE IN WASHINGTON BY ICKES

Signalizing the approach of National Wildlife Restoration Week, 12 wild pintail ducks, tagged with gold-plated number bands, will be shipped by air line to the Nation's capital from San Francisco Friday, March 8 and released by Secretary of the Interior Harold L. Ickes and Biological Survey Chief Ira N. Gabrielson.

The birds, first migratory waterfowl known to have been flown across the continent by power other than their own, will be released in Roaches Run, near the Washington airport, at about 10 a.m. This is the first time, according to the Biological Survey, that wildfowl have been removed from one flyway and released in another.

Although the release of the birds will be a part of the observance of National Wildlife Restoration Week, the event will not be without scientific aspects. It will give naturalists of the Biological Survey opportunity to study the migratory reaction of the wildfowl when they are liberated 3,000 miles away from their usual lanes of flight. Migration studies of the Survey up to this time have indicated that such birds usually spend their lives in whichever one of the four major American flyways they are raised. (These flyways - or normal routes used by migratory birds - are the Atlantic, the Mississippi, the Central and the Pacific flyways.)

What the hitchhiking ducks will do when they are liberated, is anybody's guess, Biological Survey officials said. Some observers are of the opinion that the birds will start directly back to the Pacific Coast under their own power. Others believe that they will follow other migratory waterfowl in the Atlantic flyway, which is the lane used in the Washington area. Some hold that the ducks will take off for all four flyways, or anywhere away from their captors.

National Wildlife Restoration Week will be observed March 17 to 23. The first important meeting of the week is the 5th Annual North American Wildlife Conference, which will hold a 3-day session in Washington on March 18, 19, and 20. The conference is sponsored jointly by the American Wildlife Institute and the National Wildlife Federation.

The pintails, or springs, as these wild ducks are called in the West, will be transported across the country in little more than a day. Crated in special compartments to avoid injuring the birds, they will be placed on a commercial airliner in San Francisco at 7:15 a.m., Thursday, and flown to New York City. There they will be taken by special car directly to Newark, New Jersey, and transferred to a second plane and landed at the Washington, D. C. airport at 9:50 a.m. Friday.

Within a few minutes after the plane's arrival in the Capital an escort of the United States Park Police will whisk the birds to Roaches Run, a Department of the Interior sanctuary near the airport, where a large group of conservationists are expected to watch Secretary Ickes release the birds.

Where the birds go will be learned from the gold-plated numbered bands on each bird's leg. Each band is stamped with the following: "NOTIFY BIOL. SURVEY, WASH., D. C." Any hunter, bird-banding operator, or other individual who finds one of the birds is requested to report its band number and date and place of finding to the Biological Survey. Finders may keep the gold-plated bands.

Flying in airplanes at high altitudes will produce no adverse effects on the migratory birds, Biological Survey officials believe. Wild birds normally fly between 1,000 and 3,000 feet above the earth, however high the land may be above sea level at any given point. Thus, depending upon the altitude of the area over which they are flying, birds can withstand high altitudes.

Small birds have been recorded flying as high as 27,000 feet above sea level. A swallow was found at that altitude in the Alps.

As befits special passengers, the birds will be given special attention for comfort on their ride. Burlap bags will line the inside of each compartment in the crate, so that the darkened space will produce a quieting effect on the birds. Hay will be placed on the bottom of the crate to permit the birds to rest better.

The wild ducks will be crated in San Francisco by Biological Survey personnel who supervise the shipment. A committee of well-known California conservationists will watch the air liner take-off from the West Coast airport.